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Sensitivity to rhythmic parameters in dyslexic children: a comparison of Hungarian and English.

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Abstract

It has been proposed that sensitivity to the parameters underlying speech rhythm may be important in setting up well-specified phonological representations in the mental lexicon. However, different acoustic parameters may contribute differentially to rhythm and stress in different languages. Here we contrast sensitivity to one such cue, amplitude envelope onset (rise time), in dyslexic and normally-developing children in two languages, Hungarian and English, ages from 7 to 11. Dyslexic and control children received phonological tasks, reading and spelling tasks and auditory processing tasks. While sensitivity to rise time was related to phonological representation in both languages, clear differences were found between languages. It is suggested that these differences may reflect differential language-specific weighting of different acoustic cues to rhythm and stress.